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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Albania

DATE DISTR. 31 August 1948

SUBJECT Emigration of Albanian Refugees to Syria

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SUPPLEMENT TO
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The following are excerpts from a letter written by a prominent member of the Balli Kombetar, [REDACTED] at the displaced persons camp, Lavrion, Greece, concerning Albanian emigration to Syria.

The reasons which compel us to bring our fellow refugees to these parts are as follows:

1. The Italians generally nurse a kind of hatred against the Albanians as a result of the events of the war. They express this hatred quite openly to the members of the Balli Kombetar organization who had taken a part, more or less, against the Italian Army of occupation.
2. This hatred has been aggravated by the machinations of the Albanian collaborators with the Fascist regime. These collaborators have been criticized both verbally and in writing by the Youth of Balli Kombetar for their past policy.
3. The hatred of the Italian authorities for the members of our organization has been demonstrated in several cases, and particularly recently by the arrest of more than 20 of our followers by the Italian police on the day when the Allied armies left Italy. Under such circumstances it is impossible for our comrades in Balli Kombetar to remain in Italy.
4. The International Refugee Organization (I.R.O.) treats shamefully the Albanians in the displaced persons camps, and particularly badly the members of Balli Kombetar. The latter are the victims of propaganda and machinations directed against them by the Italians who are working for the I.R.O. in Reggio Emilia.
5. In Italy, where hundreds of thousands of refugees are living, the government is paying close attention to prevent freedom of organization amongst them, because this might create a grave danger for the Italians. Still less can the Italian authorities permit the Albanian refugees to organize or to have freedom of expression. Not only do the Italians nurse this hatred against a part of the Albanians, but there are also special interests which the Italians have in Albania, and these interests all Italian regimes seek to protect. The Yugoslav and Bulgarian Embassies, on the contrary, are working actively with the purpose of dividing the Albanian refugees,

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in order to paralyze any nationalist activity on their part. For these reasons it is impossible for the Albanian refugees in Italy to unite, much less to organize and to act in accordance with their national interests.

6. On the other hand the present Italian government has made repeated efforts to come to some agreement with the government of Enver Hoxha. A few weeks ago I learned that a delegation from Hoxha had arrived in Rome in order to continue discussions. Not only we of Balli Kombetar but also well-known Italophiles have begun to fear that the government in Rome will mistreat us all or hand us over to Koci Xoxe in exchange for hundreds of Italians who are now in Albania, detained by the red regime. For moral and political reasons, as well as reasons of survival, it is imperative for us to remove our comrades as quickly as possible from Italy.
7. It seems to me that Syria is the most suitable place of all for the gathering of Albanian refugees. In the first place the people and the government here are absolutely anti-Communist, and Communism is our chief enemy. Here there is no legal Communist movement. When we first came here a band of nationalists made an armed attack on the Communist center and destroyed it.
8. Syria is a country with absolute democratic freedom. Syria has no special interests in Albania. Because of their memory of their association with the Albanian people under the Ottoman Empire, the Syrians have a special sympathy for the Albanians. Furthermore the refugee Kosovars joined the Syrian people in their fights against the French troops, and this made a deep impression here.
9. From an international political and strategic view, Syria lies outside the lines of the anti-Soviet front in case of a general conflict, but it is a neighbor to Turkey and close to Greece. These states can be regarded today as two bastions of the Western World in the Middle East. From this point of view Syria is a favorable place not only for those able to bear arms, but also for those who are unable to do so, because we shall avoid the many living at the expense of the few. As regards Argentina, I flatly rejected this country last year, because it is too far away and is outside the radius of our political and military activity.
10. I do not understand why an understanding with Greece should be hindered if we come here to Syria, which has no special interests in Albania, or why it should not be hindered if we remain, for example, in Italy, which is a natural opponent of Greece as regards her policy towards Albania.
11. Official Greek circles do not realize that Italian circles regard a Greco-Albanian understanding as a catastrophe. Greek circles do not realize that one of the reasons why Italy fights the Balli Kombetar, apart from memories of the war, is the tendency of this organization to a rapprochement with Greece. Several Italian newspapers have stressed this in their columns, charging that Balli Kombetar is Italophobe and Hellenophile.
12. For this reason the further stay of the Albanian refugees in Italy would probably be a hindrance to Greek-Albanian understanding. On the other hand, their arrival in Syria cannot hinder such an understanding. It is my firm conviction that for refugees to gather here is the only way to facilitate a Greek-Albanian rapprochement, if it can indeed be achieved. Therefore our arrival here is a necessity, not a handicap.
13. I think that as soon as we form the National Front, for which I am striving, not only in Rome but also in Athens and in many important centers such as Paris, Geneva, London and particularly Washington and elsewhere, there must be centers of organization and of national propaganda.

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14. The only difference will be that those who speak and act today in Rome and Athens do so independently on their own initiative, without having any authority or general responsibility. If, however, there is one organization, they will be selected and will be controlled in expressing the opinion of the whole organization. Thus will be avoided all exploitation at the expense of the people, and there will be no talk of "exposing" the refugees at present or in the future. Then only can the foreigners have confidence, when they are faced with a group of patriots who seek nothing but the good of their country. Otherwise they cannot know what they are promising or what kind of obligations they can undertake mutually and responsibly.

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